

more and more strain, more and more tours of duty.

Here are our priorities. We passed the largest increase in veterans benefits in the 77-year history of the VA. We passed legislation to increase the minimum wage. We passed legislation to expand access to health care for 10 million children. We passed legislation to cut the student loan interest rate in half. The list goes on.

And what do you hear from the Republicans? Nothing. You hear, let's put more money into the war in Iraq. Let's lengthen the time that the men and women fighting on our behalf spend there. Let's send them over there for more and more tours of duty. Do you ever hear anything from that side of the aisle in terms of an agenda, in terms of getting anything done? All I hear is "no." All I hear is, "not going to do that." All I hear, again, is, "Yes, Mr. President. Whatever you say, Mr. President."

Our criticism of them, Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN, if you remember, in the 30-Something Working Group in the 109th was that they were the bobblehead Republicans who did nothing more than shake their head up and down and do whatever the President said. And nothing has changed. Well, guess what. A year from now, which is just about a year from now, they will be called to account just like you said, Mr. MEEK, and we will see just how many fewer Republicans there will be here that serve in this chamber, because I think the American people have had it up to here.

I would be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I just want to make a point. It is not like we are out on a limb here. We just saw a poll that came out a few days ago from CNN that shows that seven in 10 Americans oppose this war. That is the highest number, 68 percent, 70 percent of Americans oppose this war, the highest number since the war began.

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We are seeing almost by the week, by the day, new generals, new senior retired American military officials coming out and breaking with this President. We have already seen the Iraq Study Group, we have already seen dozens of foreign policy experts come out and plead with this President. Even many of his best friends, many of his father's advisors have pleaded for a new course.

The Democrats are on the side of the American public. The Democrats are on the side of the foreign policy community on Iraq. The Democrats are on the side of an increasing number of retired military generals and officials on this issue. As you said, there is just a very loyal, very recalcitrant block of Republicans who refuse to abide by the growing will of the American public on this issue. There will be a price to be paid for this.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. If the gentleman will yield. What is clear

here is there is a threat of panic running through the caucus on the other side of the aisle because we are up to 16 of their incumbent Members who have decided to bail and who recognize that the ship is listing and has been listing badly and is in danger of just completely going down. There doesn't appear to be any likelihood of the ship righting itself in the near future. They aren't expected and aren't expecting to get their act together and focus on an agenda that the American people support because they have been a one-note, tunnel-vision party for far too long.

So you have 16 that have decided to retire already, with, we are sure, more to come. It's just not surprising because they do not share the priorities of everyday working families, Americans who want the Congress to focus on a new direction and not give them more of the same.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It's interesting, and I think you made the right point. It seems like the President has one priority, and one and only one, and that is the funding of the war. What is interesting is when you look at the Labor-HHS bill, some of the other bills we are trying to pass that increase the Pell Grants and some of the other things, we are not getting the level of support we should.

These vets need those programs. These veterans that are coming back, it's not like they are making a lot of money, many of them with their kids they are trying to send to college. So why wouldn't this apply? The vets aren't just fighting for the Defense appropriations bill that passes out of the House or the VA benefit package that passes out of the House. The veterans are fighting for America. They are fighting for a strong country that does research and development. Veterans have family members who get cancer. So they are very concerned, I would think, Mr. Speaker, with investments at NIH to continue cancer research. They have kids that may need health care. They have kids that go to school. They may have a kid that wants to participate in a Head Start program. In each instance, Mr. ALTMIRE, our fearless leader in this 30-Something group tonight, these vets are fighting for what makes America great, and that is freedom, that is investment, that is a strong economy. Those are the kind of things we are investing in.

So to say your only priority is the war and spending what is now projected by the end of the year \$1.3 trillion in the war. The President says, and a small group of recalcitrant Republicans say here in the House: We can't fund it because we don't have the money to put in the health care and everything else.

Mr. MEEK. Will the gentleman yield for a second? I know you're an appropriator and we are talking about appropriations. You and Mr. MURPHY are kind of throwing around these big words tonight. Let it be known that

some of us in the room just want to break it down a little bit here in this Chamber.

I can't go back to my district and tell Ms. Johnson and Ms. Rodriguez or Ms. Jones who worked their entire lives that because the President decides to veto the Labor-Health bill, and I think it's important that we share this with the Members, we can't tell those individuals to suck it up. I am sorry that you weren't in the Defense bill. I am sorry that it had nothing to do with Iraq and Afghanistan, that we can't be for you.

One thing I can say here in this House is that we are for them and that we are standing for those individuals, and they are Republicans and they are Independents and they are Democrats and they are nonvoters and individuals thinking about voting for the first time. They are the sick and shut-in on that sick and shut-in list when people go to wherever they worship, or whatever the case may be. They are the individuals counting on this Congress to stand for them.

The Congress is doing what we are supposed to do, Mr. ALTMIRE. But the bottom line is that the President has to do what he has to do, and he has to be the President of the United States of America, not just to secure the issue in Iraq. We have Americans here right now that need our support and our help.

I am glad that we are here and I am glad that we are putting the pressure on the minority party to do the right thing on behalf of their constituents and the American people.

Mr. ALTMIRE.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Thanks to all my colleagues who participated tonight. Thanks, especially, Mr. Speaker for the time allotted to us. Please, to continue the discussion, anyone can go to [www.speaker.gov](http://www.speaker.gov) and go to the 30-Something Working Group and we can continue this discussion by e-mail.

I thank the Speaker.

#### AMERICAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for the remaining time until midnight as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BURGESS. I thank the Speaker. The hour is late, the time is short. I do want to talk a little bit about health care this evening. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, in order to clear the air from the last 40 minutes, let's start off with a Bible verse. Let's start off reading from the Old Testament from the book of Habakkuk, Chapter 2. "I will stand upon my watch, and I will set me upon the tower, and I will watch to see what he will say to me, and what I shall answer. And the Lord answered, Write the vision, make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie. Wait for